12/17/2007 – Week #08 – One Step Forward, One Step Back

The Week In Review

The University of Michigan men's basketball team played two games last week, and they won the first one and lost the second one. On Wednesday (12/12/2007), they beat Oakland University 103-87, then on Saturday (12/15/2007), they lost to Central Michigan University, 78-67. The win and the loss leave Michigan with a record of 4-7. The win ended a 4-game losing streak, but the loss might well be start of a new 3- or 4- game losing streak. More about that later.

The Oakland game was very exciting, with lots of offense, but not a lot of defense. OU jumped out to an early lead (16-12, with just 5 minutes gone), and they hit 7 of their first 8 shots. It looked like Michigan was in for a dogfight, but once things settled down a little, the Wolverines started to dominate. The score was tied 21-21 with about 12 minutes left in the 1st half when Michigan went ahead for good. The lead was 13 points at halftime, and got as high as 22 points midway through the 2nd half, before finally ending up as a 16-point win. It was fun to watch the Wolverines run and gun, and it was great to see them hit 100 points for the first time since 1998.

In contrast, the CMU game was very embarrassing. Michigan should never lose to a Mid-American Conference team, especially at home. I'm torn between the CMU game and the Harvard loss as being the most embarrassing loss in the last 30 years.

CMU played a tight man-to-man defense against Michigan, and it flustered the young Wolverines. They committed way too many unforced errors, and made lots of poor decisions. The game was close for the first 12 minutes, then CMU started pulling away, and Michigan was powerless to stop them. UM did get as close as 2 points (44-42) mid-way through the 2nd half, but CMU immediately pushed the lead back up to double digits, and never were in danger of losing the rest of the way.

Game Statistics

First, let's look at the shooting statistics from the Oakland game:

Team	Field goals	3-Pointers	Free throws
Michigan	34-59 (57.6%)	7-17 (41.2%)	28-32 (87.5%)
Oakland	32-76 (42.1%)	8-24 (33.3%)	15-21 (71.4%)
Advantage	Michigan	Michigan	Michigan

Michigan dominated these stats, and that's why they won the game. Anytime you shoot 57.6%, you should win. The free-throw numbers for Michigan are also impressive.

Now, let's look at the non-shooting statistics from the Oakland game:

Team	Rebounds	Assists	Turnovers	Blocks	Steals
Michigan	43	20	13	8	5
Oakland	32	17	8	1	5
Advantage	Michigan	Michigan	OU	Michigan	Even

The big stat here is Rebounds. Those 11 extra possessions for Michigan really helped. It's nice to see UM with more assists than turnovers for a change.

Next, let's look at the shooting statistics from the Central Michigan game:

Team	Field goals	3-Pointers	Free throws
Michigan	27-55 (49.1%)	4-8 (50.0%)	9-13 (69.2%)
Central Michigan	28-55 (50.9%)	6-15 (40.0%)	16-18 (88.9%)
Advantage	CMU	Michigan	CMU

These stats are all pretty close. Both teams took 55 shots, and CMU hit one more than UM did. Of course, they did hit two more 3-pointers than UM, but still. The big difference was at the free throw line, where CMU hit more free throws than UM attempted.

Finally, let's look at the non-shooting statistics from the Central Michigan game:

Team	Rebounds	Assists	Turnovers	Blocks	Steals
Michigan	31	15	23	3	7
Central Michigan	29	10	18	5	9
Advantage	Michigan	Michigan	CMU	CMU	CMU

How did Michigan lose this game? They had more rebounds and assists, and were close in blocks and steals. The big difference: 5 more turnovers.

Season 3-Point Shooting

Here's my theory: Michigan should win a game if they can shoot at least 20 3-pointers, and hit at least 40% of them. Of course, they can still win the game when they shoot less than 20 3-pointers, or when they hit less than 40% of them. I'm just saying that they should win the game if they do shoot 20 and make 40%. Let's see how they that works this season:

Date	Opponent	3-Point Shooting	Result	Fits Theory?
11/09/2007	Radford	7-23 (30.4%)	W	N/A
11/11/2007	Brown	12-24 (50.0%)	W	Yes
11/15/2007	At Georgetown	5-18 (27.8%)	L	Yes
11/21/2007	Butler (neutral site)	8-20 (40.0%)	L	No
11/23/2007	Eastern Washington (neutral site)	10-27 (37.0%)	W	N/A
11/24/2007	Western Kentucky (neutral site)	5-17 (29.4%)	L	Yes
11/28/2007	Boston College	9-25 (36.0%)	L	Yes
12/01/2007	At Harvard	5-20 (25.0%)	L	Yes
12/08/2007	At Duke	6-19 (31.6%)	L	Yes
12/12/2007	Oakland	7-17 (41.2%)	W	N/A
12/15/2007	Central Michigan	4-8 (50.0%)	L	Yes
Totals		78-218 (35.8%)		7-1

Here's why I'm tracking this key stat this season: the CMU game. It perfectly proves my point. Michigan is a team that lives and dies with the 3-point shot. CMU held UM to zero 3-point attempts in the 1st half, and only 8 shots total. That's how you beat Michigan.

Individual Statistics

Coach Beilein went with his new starting lineup in both games, with Ekpe Udoh in place of Zack Gibson. Here's how the starters did:

	Field Goals		3-Pointers		Free Throws		Points	
Player	OU	CMU	OU	CMU	OU	CMU	OU	CMU

Ron Coleman	4-5	4-5	2-2	0-1	3-3	0-0	13	8
Kelvin Grady	1-3	5-5	0-2	1-1	0-0	0-0	2	11
Manny Harris	7-16	3-10	1-4	0-0	9-9	6-8	24	12
DeShawn Sims	8-14	8-11	0-3	1-1	6-7	0-0	22	17
Ekpe Udoh	4-6	3-7	1-1	0-0	2-2	0-1	11	6
Totals	24-44 54.5%	23-38 60.5%	4-12 33.3%	2-3 66.7%	20-21 95.2%	6-9 66.7%	72	54

As a group, the starters did pretty well. Their percentages are good, except for 3-point shooting in the Oakland game, and they scored a lot of points in the Oakland game, but not in the CMU game.

Individually, both Harris and Sims scored in double figures in both games, and Coleman came close. The other starters each had at least one good game.

As far as the bench players go, Coach Beilein played at least 5 in each game. Once again, Jerret Smith didn't play in either game. So far, he has only played in 5 games (out of 11) this season, between an ankle injury and some academic issues.

Here's how the bench players did:

	Field Goals		3-Pointers		Free Throws		Points	
Player	OU	CMU	OU	CMU	OU	CMU	OU	CMU
Zack Gibson	2-4	2-8	0-0	1-1	3-4	0-0	7	5
C.J. Lee	2-2	2-5	1-1	1-2	0-0	2-2	5	7
David Merritt	0-0	0-0	0-0	0-0	0-0	1-2	0	1
K'Len Morris	3-4	0-2	2-2	0-2	1-3	0-0	9	0
Jevohn Shepherd	3-5	0-2	0-2	0-0	4-4	0-0	10	0
Anthony Wright	0-0	DNP	0-0	DNP	0-0	DNP	0	DNP
Totals	10-15 66.7%	4-17 23.5%	3-5 60.0%	2-5 40.0%	8-11 72.7%	3-4 75.0%	31	13

As a group, the bench players did quite well in the Oakland game, but they let the team down in the CMU game. Their shooting percentages are decent, except for field goal percentage in the CMU game, and they chipped in some points in the Oakland game, but not nearly enough in the CMU game.

Individually, only Shepherd hit double figures in either game. Lee did a nice job when he was out there, although he did miss a key layup in the CMU game that started CMU's run to a big lead. Of course, he wasn't the only player who made a mistake in the CMU game.

The Big Picture

I hate to make too much of one game, but the CMU game was scary bad. It was a blueprint for how to beat "The Beilein Offense", at least the way UM is currently running it. So, was the CMU game a sign of (bad) things to come, or just another "blip" on the learning curve? We'll have to wait and see, but if Michigan keeps playing the way they did against CMU, they might not even get to 10 wins this season. There are plenty of talented young players on the team, and we've seen what Beilein's offense can do when it's run correctly (the Oakland game), but we've also seen how it can fall apart very easily (the Harvard and CMU games).

Here's the 2007-2008 schedule/results:

Date	Opponent	Site	Result	Score	Record
11/01/2007 (Thu)	Ferris State (exhibition)	Ann Arbor	W	78-40	0-0
11/09/2007 (Fri)	Radford	Ann Arbor	W	82-55	1-0
11/11/2007 (Sun)	Brown	Ann Arbor	W	72-57	2-0
11/15/2007 (Thu)	Georgetown	Washington, D.C.	L	74-52	2-1
Carrs/Safeway Great Alaska Shootout					
11/21/2007 (Wed)	Butler	Anchorage, Alaska	L	79-65	2-2
11/23/2007 (Fri)	Eastern Washington	Anchorage, Alaska	W	61-53	3-2
11/24/2007 (Sat)	Western Kentucky	Anchorage, Alaska	L	73-69	3-3
ACC/Big Ten Challenge					
11/28/2007 (Wed)	Boston College	Ann Arbor	L	77-64	3-4
12/01/2007 (Sat)	Harvard	Boston, Mass.	L	62-51	3-5
12/08/2007 (Sat)	Duke	Durham, N.C.	L	95-67	3-6
12/12/2007 (Wed)	Oakland	Ann Arbor	W	103-87	4-6
12/15/2007 (Sat)	Central Michigan	Ann Arbor	L	78-67	4-7
12/22/2007 (Sat)	UCLA	Ann Arbor			
01/02/2008 (Wed)	Wisconsin	Ann Arbor			
01/05/2008 (Sat)	Purdue	West Lafayette, Ind.			
01/08/2008 (Tue)	Indiana	Ann Arbor			
01/12/2008 (Sat)	Northwestern	Evanston, Ill.			
01/16/2008 (Wed)	Illinois	Champaign, Ill.			
01/19/2008 (Sat)	Iowa	Ann Arbor			
01/22/2008 (Tue)	Wisconsin	Madison, Wis.			
01/27/2008 (Sun)	Michigan State	East Lansing, Mich.			
01/31/2008 (Thu)	Minnesota	Ann Arbor			
02/05/2008 (Tue)	Ohio State	Columbus, Ohio			
02/09/2008 (Sat)	Penn State	Ann Arbor			
02/14/2008 (Thu)	Iowa	Iowa City, Iowa			
02/17/2008 (Sun)	Ohio State	Ann Arbor			
02/21/2008 (Thu)	Minnesota	Minneapolis, Minn.			
02/23/2008 (Sat) or 02/24/2008 (Sun)	Illinois	Ann Arbor			
02/26/2008 (Tue)	Northwestern	Ann Arbor			
03/01/2008 (Sat)	Penn State	State College, Pa.			
03/08/2008 (Sat) or 03/09/2008 (Sun)	Purdue	Ann Arbor			
Big Ten Tournament					
03/13/2008 (Thu)	First Round	Indianapolis, Ind.			
03/14/2008 (Fri)	Quarterfinal	Indianapolis, Ind.			
03/15/2008 (Sat)	Semifinal	Indianapolis, Ind.			
03/16/2008 (Sun)	Championship	Indianapolis, Ind.			

The Upcoming Week

As you can see in the schedule above, Michigan only has one game this week, and it's another tough one. On Saturday (12/22/2007, 2:00 p.m.), they play (#7) UCLA. The game is in Crisler Arena, and on national TV (CBS), so come on down and cheer on the Wolverines, then check back here next week to see what happened, and why.

Go Blue!